

What is Islam? and How to Convert to Islam

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
All Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds and may peace
and blessings of Allah be upon the most honorable of all
Prophets and Messengers; Muhammad.

Introduction

Every right or wrong ideology, every beneficial or harmful community association and every good or evil party has principles, intellectual basis and ideological issues that determine its purpose and direction and become as a constitution for its members and followers. Whoever wants to belong to one of them, has to look firstly at its principles. If he is satisfied with the principles, believes of its validity and accepts it with his conscious and subconscious mind without any doubts, then he can be a member of that association or party. Afterwards, he enrolls among the lines of its members and has to perform the duties required by the constitution and pay the membership fees that are set by the laws. He also has to exhibit behaviors indicate loyalty to its principles besides always remembering those principles to not commit deeds contradict with them. He has to be a perfect example via showing decent morals and behaviors and become a real proponent of them. Nutshell, being a member of a party or association requires: knowing its laws, believing in its principles, obeying its rules and conducting one's life accordance to it. This is a general situation that also applies to Islam. Therefore, whoever wants to enter Islam has to firstly

accept its rational bases and assertively believe in them in order to have strong doctrine or faith. These rational bases entail that he must believe in the idea as the physical world is not the only world and this present life is not the only life as well. A man has been existed before he is born and he will be existed after the death again. He has not come into existence on his own but he has come before he has ever known. It is truth that he is not existed by inanimate objects around him nor by nature, simply because he has intelligence while they do not have. Instead, the man and all these worlds are existed out of nothing by one God

Allah is the only one who gives life and causes death. He is the creator and originator of everything so if He wishes to vanish anything of His creation, He vanishes and eliminates it. No one is similar to this God and no beginning or ending to His existence. He is the only one who has the extreme ability and whose knowledgeencompasses everything and nothing is hidden from Him. He has infinite justice non-similar to his creation. He is the one Who sets the law of universe that is called the “laws of nature” and ordained everything due to measures. He has fixed the measures of every creatures as well as all their details and kinds before they are born such as deciding what will happen to them in future; movement or static and constancy or transformation .

Allah has bestowed intelligence upon human so that he has ability to think what is bad or good for him and judge between them via selecting what he wants to do. Besides that, He further gives humanity His will in order to be able for achieving what he wishes. In fact, God has made this worldly life as a transient place; a mere passage to the permanent life; the

Hereafter when those who believe in Him and have done good deeds will be rewarded and those who disbelieve and have committed evil deeds will be punished. However, the main point is that Allah is the only God who shall have no partners in worship or intermediaries who can intercede with Him except after His permission. Hence, worshiping in its comprehensive sense under all its aspects, is for Allah alone as God created everything; seen and unseen creatures. Some of them are inanimate objects and others are mature living beings. Among the living beings are angels, who are only created to perform pure good deeds unlike devils that are created to do pure evil deeds (although God is not evil). Moreover, some are a mixture of good and evil or relatively good or evil such as human and jinn. So, God chose certain people among human beings to be his messengers for human kind conveying His divine legislation to them.

The Divine legislations include scriptures and scrolls revealed by God. Typically, the rules of the earlier scriptures were abrogated or altered (for a purpose) by the scriptures that came after. Actually, the last revealed book is Quran which is the only scripture has been remaining safe from any distortion or loss while the previous scriptures suffered under alteration, distortion or loss and did not remain in their original revealed form. The last prophet was Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, who belonged to the Arab tribe of Quraish, may the Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him. He was the seal of the prophets who brought the final message and the last religion, so there will be no prophet or messenger after him. The holy Quran is the constitution of Muslims from which they derive the Islamic teachings. Therefore, who believes that it was actually revealed

by Allah and believes in Quran in details then he would be called as a believer of Allah.

Faith; in this sense, can't be seen by others, yet only Allah knows what is truly in one's heart. For that reason, one must pronounce the testimony of faith by his tongue so that Muslim people can consider him as a Muslim too (I testify that there is no true god (deity) but Allah, and that Muhammad is His slave and messenger). This issue will be explained in details later. By saying the declaration of faith loudly, a person becomes a Muslim who receives the rights as all other Muslims, accepts to practice all rituals of Islam and acts according to Islamic teachings.

In fact, the rituals of Islam that are required from every Muslim are few, easy to be practiced and Muslim does not need any great efforts to perform them.

What is Islam?

-Islam literally is acceptance and submission.

-Islam in religious contexts means:

- 1- Total submission to Allah by worshiping Him alone.
- 2- Obeying His laws.
- 3- Disavowal from polytheism and its believers.

-The meaning of Islam in general sense is obedience and act according to what Allah has legislated and sent to humanity since Adam; the first Prophet, until the Day of Judgment.

-The specific meaning of Islam is to follow the message of Muhammad peace be upon him. One has to believe in what he said, follow his teachings, obey his commands and avoid what

he forbade. Islam is constituted of two essential components: the first group is referred to the articles of faith whereas the other group is categorized as the pillars of Islam.

If faith and Islam are mentioned separately, then they refer to one another, in other words, if a person is called a Muslim, it means that this person is a believer too and vice versa. Yet, if they both are mentioned together in the same context, then each one has its distinctive meaning.

First: The Articles of Faith

What is Faith (Eeman)?

-Faith literally is related to the concepts of conviction and affirmation.

-Faith in religious contexts means

1-Belief by the heart,

2-Statement by the tongue,

3-Actions by the limbs.

4-Faith increases and decreases according to one's belief and actions. Acts of obedience to Allah enhance one's faith.

5-Acts of disobedience decrease faith.

The Articles of Faith

Faith has six articles which are:

1-Belief in Allah,

2-His angels,

3-His Books,

4-His Messengers,

5-The Last Day,

6-And Predestination (whether good or bad).

The following section includes a brief explanation of each article of faith:

1-Belief in Allah

It comprises of four matters:

- a. Belief in the existence of Allah
- b. Belief in Allah's lordship (Ruboobiyyah)
- c. Belief in Allah's Oneness in Divinity (Uloohiyyah)
- d. Belief in Allah's names and attributes.

2-Belief in Angels

It involves four important issues:

- a. Belief in angels' existence. They are creations of Allah who have no free will or ability to disobey and do only what Allah commands to be done.
- b. Belief in angels mentioned by name in Quran and Sunnah (prophet's sayings) such as Gabriel, as well as those who did not mentioned too. Believe in all of them in general.
- c. Belief in the attributes of angels mentioned or described in Quran and Sunnah.
- d. Belief in the functions and duties of angels mentioned in Quran and Sunnah.

3-Belief in Allah's Books

It means to:

- a. Believe that Allah sent down his Divine books truthfully.
- b. Believe in the revealed books mentioned by name in Quran and Sunnah such as Quran, Torah, Gospel, Psalms, and the Scrolls of Abraham.
- c. Believe in Quran and whatever in the previous divine books as it is true as long as it has not been altered nor deliberately

distorted.

d. Accept and follow the law and rules of all the divine books whether we understand the purposes of such law or not. Indeed, the holy Quran abrogated all the previous scriptures.

4-Belief in Allah's messengers

It includes:

a. Belief that all prophets were sent by Allah to convey His message to all humans. Whoever denies a message of one prophet then he would deny the messages of all other prophets.

b. Belief in those prophets mentioned by name in Quran and Sunnah; for example, Muhammad, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Noah, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon them.

c. Belief whatever was said about them is true.

d. Follow and apply the legislation of Prophet Muhammad who was sent to us as well as to all humankind. He is the seal of the prophets and there will be no prophet or messenger after him.

5-Belief in the Last Day

a. Belief that last day (judgment day) is true and it will come as Allah has promised in Quran "And We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them except with truth, and the Hour is surely coming, so overlook (O Muhammad SAW), their faults with gracious forgiveness (85) Verily, your Lord is the All-Knowing Creator ." [Surah al-Hijr (15) 85-86]

"Verily, the Hour (Day of Judgment) is surely coming, therein is no doubt, yet most men believe not." [Surah Ghafir (40) 59]

b. Belief in the resurrection when Allah will turn all of us again to be alive even all those who have died since a long time. Allah says "That is because Allah, He is the Truth, and it is He Who

gives life to the dead, and it is He Who is Able to do all things. And surely, the Hour is coming, there is no doubt about it, and certainly, Allah will resurrect those who are in the graves.”[Surah Al-Hajj 22 (6-7)]

c. Belief that all mankind will be gathered for reckoning and Allah will reward them according to their beliefs and deeds. People who will be given their records of deeds by their right hand will enter Heaven, while for those who will be given their records by their left hand or behind their back will be admitted to hell.

d. Belief in Heaven and Hell.

The belief in the Last Day is not limited to just have beliefs of the four aspects mentioned earlier; it also includes belief in what will come after death namely the trial of grave and torment or blessing therein.

The evidence for believing in the Last Day can be found in the following statement of Allah “Verily! Those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.” [Surah AL-Baqarah (2) 62].

The belief in Allah and the Last Day are mentioned together about ten times in Quran, Allah says “but Al-Birr is (the quality of) the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day.” [Surah AL-Baqarah (2) 177]

6-Belief in Predestination

It has four levels:

a. Belief in the knowledge of Allah that encompasses everything.

b. Belief in the recording of all knowledge, and He wrote all predestinations in the Preserved Tablet (Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz).

c.Belief in Allah's executive will and His omnipotence. So what He wishes exists, and what He does not wish does not exist.

d.Belief that Allah is the creator of everything holding creatures' souls, attributes & movements.

Evidence on the Six Articles of Faith (from Quran and Sunnah):

1-In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says " It is not Al-Birr (piety, righteousness, and each and every act of obedience to Allah, etc.) that you turn your faces towards east and (or) west (in prayers); but Al-Birr is (the quality of) the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, the Prophets and gives his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to Al-Masakin (the poor), and to the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free, performs As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and gives the Zakat, and who fulfill their covenant when they make it, and who are As-Sabirin (the patient ones, etc.) in extreme poverty and ailment (disease) and at the time of fighting (during the battles). Such are the people of the truth and they are Al-Muttaqun (pious). " [Surah AL-Baqarah (2) 177]

2-In another verse of Qur'an, Allah states "Verily, We have created all things with Qadar (Divine Preordainments of all things before their creation, as written in the Book of Decrees Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz) (49) And Our Commandment is but one, as the twinkling of an eye." [Surah al-Qamar (54) 49-50]

3-Allah's Messenger defined faith when he was asked "What is Faith" in the Hadeeth (tradition) of Gabriel. He replied "It

(Faith) is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in al-Qadar -the good and the bad.” (Saheeh Muslim)

Second: The Pillars of Islam

Islam has five pillars that are:

- 1-Testimony of Faith (Shahaadatayn).
- 2-Prayer (Salat).
- Fast of Ramadan.
- 4-Payment of Obligatory Charity (Zakat).
- 5-Pilgrimage (Hajj); who is able to perform it.

Evidence on the Five Pillars of Islam (from Sunnah)

The messenger of Allah says: “Islam has been built on five pillars: testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the salah (prayer), paying the zakat (obligatory charity), performing the hajj (pilgrimage) to the House, and fasting in Ramadan.”, (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

How to Convert to Islam and Become the Muslim:

To become a Muslim one must believe first about the pillars of Islam and faith mentioned previously. Then he needs to pronounce voluntarily testimonies (the Shahaadatayn) with sincerity and conviction. By saying this simple proclamation he becomes a Muslim, then he needs to learn gradually the ordinances of Islam.

The more one learns and practices Islamic ordinances, the more he becomes a better Muslim. If a Muslim has a question, enquiry or misunderstanding about aspects of Islam, he has to ask reliable scholars for clarification and explanation.

The Declaration of the Shahaadatayn

1- The Shahaadatayn can be declared as follows:

“Ash haduan La ilahaila Allah, wa ash haduanna Muhammadur rasoolu Allah.”

The translation is:

(I testify that there is no true god (deity) but Allah, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.) This is the basic statement of faith declaration which is obligatory as well as sufficient for a person to become a Muslim. Ubadah bin As-Samit (May Allah be pleased upon him) reported that the messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Whosoever testifies that there is no true god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, Allah saves him from the Fire (of Hell)". (Saheeh Muslim)

2-The Shahaadatayn also can be declared in another way which is described as the complete declaration of testimony: (I testify that there is no true god (deity) but Allah, that Muhammad is a Messenger of Allah, that 'Isa (Jesus) is His slave and Messenger and he (Jesus) is His Word which He communicated to Maryam (Mary) and His spirit which He sent to her, that Jannah is true and Hell is true), some scholars add the following statement (Allah will resurrect all those who are in graves). The messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "He who bears witness that there is no true god except Allah alone no partner with Him, that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger, that

'Isa (Jesus) is His slave and Messenger and he (Jesus) is His Word which He communicated to Maryam (Mary) and His spirit which He sent to her, that Jannah is true and Hell is true; Allah will allow him to enter Jannah accepting whatever deeds he accomplished", (narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The second part of testimony, Muhammad is Allah's Messenger, implies that Allah has sent all prophets and messengers to all nations with one central message which is worshiping Allah alone.

Muhammad was the seal of those prophets and sent with the final message that confirms and fulfills all of the previous revealed messages. Muslim must believe in all prophets without making any distinction between them and who belies one prophet then he would be belied all of prophets because Allah the Exalted has stated that in the Quran: "The people of Nuh (Noah) belied the Messengers." [Surah Ash-Shuara (26) 105]

"Ad (people) belied the Messengers." [Surah Ash-Shuara (26) 123]

"Thamud (people) belied the Messenger." [Surah Ash-Shuara (26) 141]

"The people of Lout (Lot) belied the Messengers." [Surah Ash-Shuara (26) 160]

By pronouncing the testimony with conviction, a person enters the fold of Islam. Then he needs to learn the ordinances and obligations of Islam which include the five essential observances "the pillars of Islam" that Muslim must accept and follow.

Finally, it must be pointed out the differences between the pillars of faith and the pillars of Islam. The six pillars of faith are required forever to be believed by every Muslim while he is in ill or healthy, travel or residence and rich or poor condition. They are a grade higher than pillars of Islam. The pillars of Islam; however, are compulsory but with flexibility under specific conditions depending on circumstances.

All the praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds, and may Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his honorable and all his Companions.

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